

Economic Conditions

own efforts and dedication will not be the cause of his failure. It is the Minister of Finance whom this businessman in Nova Scotia blames.

● (0440)

Does the minister realize that the total sales of all businesses in Canada were over \$400 billion last year? Some 28 per cent of these total sales came from small businessmen. Total employment in this business community amounts to 6.6 million people. Small businesses employ 2.5 million people. That is 42 per cent of the total business employment in Canada. The contribution of these businesses to the gross national product is in the 40 per cent bracket. These are impressive statistics and ones to which the Minister of Finance should pay more attention. Even more important, he should pay attention to statistics which tell him that thousands of bankruptcies are already occurring in Canada. That was the situation before the present crisis. What it will be tomorrow, or this morning, next month or next year, I hesitate to contemplate. But this is not a matter of statistics, it is a matter of philosophy. It is a matter which concerns a fundamental point of view.

The true business of government is to govern, not hamper or hinder the ambitions and enterprise of a country's people. Yet this is what the Liberal government is doing. It is inhibiting the drive toward economic health and prosperity. The marketplace does not respond to regulations, rather, it responds to incentives, true, unencumbered incentives. The government should get out of the marketplace. It should get off the backs of the small businessmen in Canada and create the climate which allows independent entrepreneurs to function, not to be hindered.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, what incentives has this government provided so far since its budget, or since the election? What help has it extended in the form of an alternative to the Progressive Conservative Party's recognition that small business provides a large, stable, and diversified source of employment? Small business preserves competition and efficiency. It is a major source of innovation in our country, the small business sector which this government refuses to acknowledge. Of course, these features are contradictory to Liberal philosophies. They seek to entrench a stable and diversified source of employment. Small business seeks to do this, while the government seeks to destroy competition and efficiency through exclusive jurisdictions and monopolies. A prime example of this may be seen with respect to the possible Air Canada strike over the Christmas season. This government seeks to kill the merest shred of innovation and incentives in our society.

The conclusion to these remarks is that the Liberal small business policy is obsolete and prehistoric. Let us take a brief review: the small business development bond program introduced by the Conservative government for one year has been extended until March, 1981. That is not a great deal of use. There has been a total lack of tax relief measures in the Liberal budget which could have been extended to small businesses, to say nothing of the benefit of other tax credits to all middle and lower-income people. Unemployment insurance

premiums paid by employees and employers alike were increased by the federal government. If any more proof is needed of the government's abject failure to tackle the root problems of the economy then this is it. The government's simple solution is to have the people and businesses of this country subsidize the immense costs of its dreadful mismanagement.

Then there is the Liberals' lack of attention to farmers. They are small businessmen who play an important role in the economy of the country. The Liberal government had no problem at all finding a \$40 million for an oil company in order to keep it swallowing its disastrous National Energy Program for six more months. But the member for Cape Breton cannot seem to approve 3 per cent of that amount for a modest transfer payment which would keep Canfarm alive. Members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Quebec Union of Agricultural Producers use this computerized trans-Canada network for bookkeeping and management services. This is so essential to keep a viable farm community in place. The government ignores that. I remind the Minister of Finance that 30 per cent of Nova Scotia's farmers use the services of Canfarm.

I wonder, and I am sure the people of Canada wonder as well, why the government refuses to recognize small business, and in particular the entrepreneurs in the farm community who need this helpful service in order to continue to work. Ministers could not find 3 per cent of the \$40 million which they used to bribe a major oil company to stay in business because of that adverse financial policy implemented by this disastrous Liberal government—they cannot find 3 per cent of \$40 million to subsidize the farmers, 30 per cent of whom in Nova Scotia use Canfarm. This is disgraceful, disgusting, and a total discredit to the present government in showing its priorities as it sees major oil companies deserving of a \$40 million bribe, but for the farmers of Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada it cannot find 3 per cent in order to keep a Conservative government policy to finance Canfarm at least long enough for the farmers to prove they are capable of running their own business better than the Liberal government runs the country.

How on earth can members opposite continue to be the pretender in the name of government? By every common barometer, every single one of their actions, or rather, of their inactions, has resulted in immediate condemnation, not only rhetorically but through irrefutable indicators of the money markets, of investment capital, business investment, from increasing unemployment figures, which are the most basic indicators of the country's health. The value of the dollar is comment enough on this extraordinary record. It is only a hollow victory which I will be able to read about in *Hansard*. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) said last year:

The Liberals and I generally want action taken now to prevent the hardship this Conservative high interest rate policy is creating for millions of Canadians and their families.